

Q: So you just marched right on up?

A: We just marched, and whenever the reconnaissance plane came over we'd stop and get off the road. We weren't shelled, so I guess it was all right.

Q: Just as long as you made it. When you left France, did you actually go to Camp Gordon at that time?

A: I never went to Camp Gordon because I left. I went on leave to see my wife and only son after we'd landed in New York. I got a leave and got over to see them. Had never seen the boy and I had, oh, about ten days' leave. In the meantime, I got orders to go to Kansas City, so I never went to Camp Gordon as I remember. I don't think so.

Kansas City and Virginia Military Institute

Q: You returned to New York, I believe, in July 1919. Is that right?

A: Let me see, seems to me it was about the first of August. I know it was the last of July or the first of August.

Q: And you only got ten days' leave?

A: Oh, yes. And I was lucky to get that. Very few people got it, but my regimental commander objected to that very much. He wanted to see his family, too. I won out for that much, and I got these few days off. And it was while I was on that leave that I got orders to Kansas City, and I went out there and stayed only a couple of months. Then I landed down in Lexington, Virginia, at VMI [Virginia Military Institute] the day before Armistice Day—I remember that—that was in 1919, I guess.

Q: You returned from Europe as a major.

A: I was a major.

Q: Let's see, I think you were promoted to captain in May of 1917.

A: Oh, I had been captain at Washington Barracks. We were all promoted. You see then they had branch promotions. My brother, who graduated two years ahead of me, was still a first lieutenant when I was a captain because he was in the Cavalry and their promotions were very slow. But it wasn't until after the war that they got the single promotion list. In those days the Engineer promotions were very fast. So I was a major, no, I was a captain when I went to Leavenworth. I didn't have my majority and that was one reason why these people in 1915—they got their majorities ahead of us—we were waiting for orders but there was no place for them to go in Europe. They'd had their command; they couldn't command companies anymore and there were no battalions ready for them, so they had to go off to training camps. We were very fortunate that we didn't get our promotions in the way they did, until we got to France. Promotion to a major, seems to me, was in July of that year.

Q: Let's see, I have 1 August 1918.

A: About the end of July or the first of August, and I stayed on with the battalion. I took over the battalion from my previous battalion commander.

Q: So, you were able to command a battalion as a major?

A: Yes, I commanded a battalion all through the war. Towards the end of the war, a lieutenant colonel had been relieved, and I acted as lieutenant colonel of the regiment; but I never did get promoted to lieutenant colonel. When we got back, I went to VMI as a major. That's when I got busted.

Q: Did you consider that as a "bust"? Everybody was being reverted, I think.

A: Everybody-colonels went down, even brigadier generals went down to captains, I think, or some of them. I have heard of them in the Cavalry or something like that.

Q: What did that do to the morale of the officer corps?

A: It was bad for those people. But the officer corps wasn't very large. See, when I entered the Army, the entire officer corps including Medical was only five thousand, and they were split up in all these branches and so on. But when I got up to captain, I stayed a captain. There was one thing about our promotion that we got before, let's see, we got our promotions back to majors. No, we didn't either—we got busted back, but we kept our pay as a major—what do you call that?

Q: Were you reimbursed or [did you] receive retroactive pay?

A: No, you can't reverse it. You couldn't in those days. Your pay stayed the same—except that there was a to-do about a Colonel Peck and I've forgotten what he was in. But anyway, somebody had been with the 35th Division and he had made some enemies among congressmen and particularly in the Kansas-Missouri area. They were from Kansas and Missouri—the 35th Division—and when he came up for promotion, they stopped all promotion but we had gotten promoted just before that so we held our pay even though we were busted, but they didn't. And the tail end of my class, at least half of my class, maybe not quite that many—a lot of my class didn't get over that barrier in time to retain their pay, and it stopped them; but we continued to draw major's pay though we were captains. I stayed at VMI for two years, I believe, and went to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]; and while up there, I got promoted back again.

Q: So you were a major again in April of 1921. Were most of the Engineer officers returning to graduate school at that time?

A: All of them were. All the bunch from West Point were. There were only about four officers who had come from civilian universities, and they had already been through a civilian institution and had degrees in engineering, but everybody else had to go to an engineering school to take this engineering training.

Q: Was there any controversy in the Army or Congress about the Army sending the Engineer officers back to school?

A: No, I don't think so. I didn't hear of any.

Q: That's come under attack again now.

A: Well, all officers go, Infantry and everybody else, don't they?

Q: No, sir, not all of them.

A: I think many of them.

Q: A large number.

A: They take all sorts of courses and advance courses in civilian colleges—not only in engineering.

Q: But it's being cut back somewhat now. There is some criticism about the Army overeducating their people and the cost is getting prohibitive. While at VMI, that was, I believe, your only instructor tour with a civilian institution on ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] assignment.

A: Yes.

Q: How did you like your assignment there?

A: Well, it was all right. We were split into little units and my unit was the small one. We had Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and Engineers, and they took them by choice. Had one hell of a time trying to get enough men to meet my quota because the rest of them, the Cavalry particularly and the Artillery, were offering all these inducements because of the riding horses and doing all that sort of thing, teaching horsemanship. They had the big drag, and I was losing too many of them. So, I got a group of engineering instructors, civilian, and I got them to work for me and got Washington to send me down a lot of extra equipment. Things like photographic equipment and all sorts of things—and then I got these assistant professors to help me recruit these cadets. So, I did get up to about, oh, I think maybe the strength in my unit was about 25 or something like that. That unit expired after my tour, I think. I don't

know whether anybody took it over after that. I recommended against it myself. There were not enough men for four units.

Q: Not enough interest in the Corps then?

A: No, the take was so small it was hardly worth it. But I did everything to get my people in there and get them recruited and stay in; and we did all sorts of extra things, but I didn't have the horses to attract them. That seemed to be the big pull, and these other—the PMS&T was a doughboy—and all the senior instructors there were artillerymen and cavalrymen. I was certainly at the bottom of the heap. I had to work all the time to get enough people to do it. But we did get by—of course, we didn't have enough to even qualify. I didn't think it—I wouldn't want to say anything against VMI—but I didn't think it was up to standards in engineering. I had a couple of good friends in engineering; they were professors of engineering-particularly chemical and civil engineers. They were pretty good friends of mine but they were behind; well, I'll tell you—when I left, here's an example of their standard of education. When I left VMI and went to MIT there were two graduates; there were several graduates of VMI went up the same year. We, as West Point graduates, only had to take one year to get our degree. Those people had to start back as sophomores.

Q: And go through three more years to get the degree?

A: So that's just the difference. That was a secondary college in their quality of education.

Q: I think they've improved a great deal now. It's a good system now. You mentioned the problem of getting cadets into the Engineer portion of the ROTC unit there. Did you find after World War I—I guess we hit it after every war: there's a loss of interest in the military, the drastic reductions in military—did you find that kids were more reluctant to come to VMI or any other military or ROTC school?

A: I don't remember. It seems to me that VMI was full up to their quota. Of course, they only had a total corps there of, oh, around four or five hundred at that time. I have a great admiration for VMI graduates, and

I've known them in the Army. I think the greatest man I ever knew was a VMI graduate, greatest American—that's General [George C.] Marshall.

Q: Yes, sir.

A: Without doubt, he tops them all. He's the greatest man I ever knew, and I think he's the greatest American in my time.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Q: I'd like to talk more about him later on and some of the other general officers, the very successful ones. Well, let's see, after you left VMI, you went up to MIT. You did get your degree in one year?

A: Yes.

Q: Your master's in civil engineering?

A: We didn't get master's—we only got bachelors. West Point did not give a B.S. at that time.

Rock Island

Q: Oh, you got bachelor's, I'm sorry. And then you had your, I guess, your second tour, no, this would be your first tour in a district, in the Office of the District Engineer in Rock Island, Illinois.

A: I went there from MIT to Rock Island. My first short period was in Kansas City after the First World War, but that was only a matter of two or three months.

Q: What type of work was the District engaged in at that time; you were there almost two years?

A: Most of it was building some levees. We had a dredge or so. We had very little work; we had very little money. I had charge of rebuilding the